

Message Text

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SUBJECT: ARTICLE ON BLRD PROJECT

1. FOLLOWING ARTICLE ENTITLED REP. FLOOD PUSHES AID CATTLE PROJECT BY DAN MORGAN APPEARED IN WASHINGTON POST FEB.9:

"REP. DANIEL J. FLOOD (D-PA.) WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR GETTING THE AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO FUND A \$10 MILLION AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH PROJECT ON A THINLY POPULATED CARIBBEAN ISLAND, ACCORDING TO SOURCES IN AID.

"THE EXPERIMENTAL OPERATION, NICKNAMED THE 'BAHAMIAN RED MEAT PROJECT,' GENERATED CONSIDERABLE CONTROVERSY IN THE AGENCY BECAUSE OF ITS COST AND THE DIFFICULTY OF RAISING LIVESTOCK ON THE CORAL ISLAND.

"SOME AID OFFICIALS ALSO SAID THAT THE PROJECT MAY NEVER HAVE BEEN CONCEIVED EXCEPT FOR THE INTEREST OF A HANDFUL OF INFLUENTIAL HOUSE MEMBERS.

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"A NUMBER OF AID OFFICIALS SAID LAST WEEK THAT CONGRES-

SIONAL INTERFERENCE IN THE FOREIGN AID PROGRAM WAS PER-

VASIVE AND THAT LEGISLATORS SEEMED IN SOME CASES TO BE USING IT AS A POLITICAL SLUSH FUND.

"AID ADMINISTRATOR DANIEL PARKER SAID IN AN INTERVIEW THAT HE HAD 'HEARD ALLEGATIONS THAT (THE BAHAMIAN RED MEAT PROJECT) WAS A CONTRIVED THING.'

"BUT HE ADDED: 'I AM VERY PROUD OF WHAT THE AGENCY HAS DONE TO MAKE IT A VALID PROJECT. BY THE TIME I CAME ON BOARD I CONSIDERED IT TO BE GERMANE.'

"HE SAID THAT HE COULD NOT SAY WHETHER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS HAD ACTUALLY INSTITUTED IT AND SAID, 'I DON'T THINK MANY (PROJECTS) ARE DIRECTLY INSTIGATED.'

"AN AGREEMENT TO GO AHEAD WITH THE BAHAMIAN PROJECT WAS SIGNED IN JANUARY, 1974, BEFORE PARKER TOOK OVER AS ADMINISTRATOR. ACCORDING TO AID, \$2.1 MILLION HAS BEEN SPENT SO FAR. PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY HAS A \$1.7 MILLION, FIVE-YEAR CONTRACT TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN THE AGRICULTURE RESEARCH, AND A TEXAS CONSORTIUM OF TWO UNIVERSITIES HAS A \$1.59 MILLION FIVE-YEAR CONTRACT TO PROVIDE LOGISTICAL AND OTHER SUPPORT.

"THE TWO UNIVERSITIES, BAYLOR AND TEXAS STATE TECHNICAL INSTITUTE, FORMED THE WESTERN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN WACO AS THEIR OPERATING ARM FOR THE WORK.

"ADDITIONAL CONTRACTS WILL BE ISSUED TO U.S. FIRMS AND UNIVERSITIES LATER, AN AID SPOKESMAN SAID. THE WORK IS UNDER WAY ON ANDROS, THE LARGEST BAHAMIAN ISLAND. IT HAS A POPULATION OF 8,000.

"REACHED BY TELEPHONE AT HIS HOME IN WILKES BARRE, PA. FLOOD SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED A BAHAMIAN AGRICULTURAL PROJECT WITH VARIOUS OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON AFTER RETURNING FROM A TRIP TO THE BAHAMAS SEVERAL YEARS AGO.
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"HE CITED THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE ISLANDS AS ONE REASON FOR GOING AHEAD.

"'I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THIS WASN'T DONE BEFORE,' HE SAID. 'MY CONCERN IS HEMISPHERIC DEFENSE. THE RUSSIANS ARE RUNNING AROUND IN THE CARIBBEAN DAY AND NIGHT. YOU CAN HIT THE PANAMA CANAL WITH A BACARDI BOTTLE FROM CUBA.'

"FLOOD SAID THAT HE HAD AN INTEREST IN THE BAHAMAS SINCE CHILDHOOD, AND BECAME CONVINCED THAT THE ISLANDERS COULD GROW CORN AND RAISE CATTLE.

"THERE ARE ALL THESE NICE PEOPLE, AND I OFTEN WONDER WHY THOSE ISLANDS WEREN'T TAKEN CARE OF BY THE BRITISH.'

"THE BAHAMAS GAINED THEIR INDEPENDENCE FROM BRITAIN JULY 10, 1973.

"FLOOD IS A KEY MEMBER OF THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE. HE IS CHAIRMAN OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE.

"FLOOD SAID THAT HE HAD TALKED ABOUT THE PROJECT ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS WITH REP. OTTO E. PASSMAN (D-LA.), CHAIRMAN OF THE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE THAT REVIEWS THE FOREIGN AID BUDGET, AND THAT 'HE CERTAINLY WAS HELPFUL AND FRIENDLY.'

"HE SAID HE HAD ALSO DISCUSSED THE PROJECT WITH FORMER HOUSE AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN W. R. POAGE (D-TEXAS.

"PASSMAN SAID THAT HE MAY HAVE ASKED AID FOR A REPORT ON THE PROJECT ON BEHALF OF FLOOD AND POAGE BUT THAT 'I HAD NO MORE INTEREST IN THIS PROJECT THAN YOU HAVE IN GETTING A DEGREE IN MEDICINE.'

"AID OFFICIALS SAID LAST WEEK THAT THEY HAD BEEN UNDER NO DIRECT PRESSURE FROM FLOOD TO GO AHEAD WITH THE PROJECT.

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"HOWEVER, IN LATE 1972, BEFORE THE PROJECT WAS FUNDED, OFFICIALS OF AID MET IN FLOOD'S OFFICE TO DISCUSS PLANS FOR IT, ONE SOURCE SAID.

"ASKED ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT, AN OFFICIAL SAID 'I WOULD SAY IT STARTS WITH FLOOD AND GOES FROM FLOOD TO I DON'T KNOW WHERE ... PROBABLY TO POAGE.'

"HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT 'NO MATTER HOW IT STARTED, WE HAVE A PROJECT HERE THAT COULD YIELD SOME VERY POSITIVE RESULTS.'

"SOME INITIAL DOUBTS ABOUT THE PROJECT WERE REMOVED, OFFICIALS SAID, WHEN THE EARLY EMPHASIS ON LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION WAS MODIFIED TO ALLOW SUBSTANTIAL PRODUCTION

OF AVOCADOS, MANGOS, TOMATOES AND OTHER VEGETABLES AS WELL.

"LIVESTOCK PRICES ARE DOWN SHARPLY ALL OVER THE WORLD, AND THE COSTS OF FERTILIZER, WHICH WILL BE NEEDED IN SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES TO IMPROVE THE LIMESTONE SOIL ON WHICH THE CATTLE WILL GRAZE, ARE MORE THAN DOUBLE WHAT THEY WERE WHEN THE PROJECT BEGAN.

"ONE AGRICULTURAL TECHNICIAN SAID HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE COST OF USING HEAVY EQUIPMENT TO BREAK UP THE CORAL-BASED SOIL.

"AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED, 500 HEAD OF CATTLE WILL BE BROUGHT FROM THE UNITED STATES TO FORM THE INITIAL HERD.

"ONE AGRICULTURAL TECHNICIAN SAID THAT HE STILL HAD DOUBTS ABOUT RAISING A LIMITED NUMBER OF ANIMALS ON 'SKIMPY SOIL ON A CORAL BASE.'

"IT IS BY FAR NOT THE MOST SUITABLE LAND FOR PRODUCING FORAGE FOR LIVESTOCK,' HE SAID.

"HOWEVER, OTHER OFFICIALS MAINTAIN THAT, WHILE AID IS STILL UNSURE IF THE PROJECT IS ECONOMICAL, THE ISLAND HAS UNCLASSIFIED

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150,000 ACRES OF GOOD SOIL, THERE IS A CHANCE THAT RAISING THE CATTLE WILL REDUCE THE COUNTRY'S \$60 MILLION ANNUAL BEEF IMPORTS NEEDED TO SERVE THE TOURIST INDUSTRY, AND THE EXPERIMENT COULD BECOME A MODEL FOR INTRODUCTION OF SMALL SCALE CATTLE FARMING IN SIMILAR CONDITIONS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD.

"THE CITY OF NASSAU, A MAJOR TOURIST CENTER, IS ONLY 30 MILES AWAY BY SEA, THEY SAY. ALSO, OFFICIALS NOTED THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS A STRATEGIC INTEREST IN THE BAHAMAS BECAUSE OF TRACKING STATIONS AND UNDERWATER RESEARCH.

"ANOTHER OFFICIAL SAID IT WAS NOT SURPRISING FOR OUTSIDERS TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS TO THE BAHAMIAN GOVERNMENT.

"IT WAS A NEW GOVERNMENT, AND THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO TURN,' HE SAID." INGERSOLL

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